

# Volunteer Policy

## 1. Introduction

Redditch Borough Council (RBC) recognises the contribution that an employee-volunteering scheme can make to the wider community; allowing employees to 'give something back' to their community whilst at the same time enhancing flexibility and development opportunities for its employees. The Council also wishes to take proactive steps to develop our relationship with the voluntary sector and regards this as one small step towards that objective.

Employee volunteering can also act as a development tool for employees, providing them with "hands on" experience and the opportunity to make a real, worthwhile difference to the community. A range of skills can be acquired through participating in voluntary work, which in turn will benefit local communities. Achievements and opportunities may be recognised in the employee PDR scheme.

Volunteering is a chance to get out and meet new people, interact with other employees and explore new challenges. Volunteering opportunities will be promoted and supported by the Council.

RBC is committed to supporting employees who wish to take time to volunteer and become more involved in community activities during their normal working hours. RBC will encourage its employees to volunteer, but recognises that volunteering is a matter of personal choice.

This policy applies to all employees of the council, irrespective of their status or position.

## 2. Main policy areas

### **What is Employee Volunteering?**

Employee volunteering is when volunteers are supported by their employer, either during work time or on their own time. Volunteering is promoted, encouraged and recognised by the Council.

### **Why Employee Volunteering Can Make a Difference**

There are benefits for RBC, its employees and the local community at large in volunteering.

### **Benefits to Employees**

Community involvement offers a whole range of benefits to employees including:

- **Learning new skills**
- **Meeting new people**
- **Boosting Confidence**
- **Making a difference**

### **Benefits to the Local Community**

The voluntary sector relies on outside support to meet the needs of the community it serves. Employee volunteers contribute time, skills and enthusiasm to get things done. Skilled employee volunteers can not only provide the professional skills which voluntary organisations struggle to afford, but also help the organisation's own staff. Volunteers, in turn, develop new skills and increased confidence.

### **Benefits to the Council**

Employee volunteering can help RBC to:

- **Help the local Community**
- **Improve local reputation**
- **Build important relationships**
- **Enhance the skills of employees**
- **Improve levels of recruitment and retention**

### **Time allowed for Volunteering and Application Request**

#### **What can I request?**

RBC will grant a maximum of 16 volunteer hours during any 12-month period, which is paid time away from work (For part time employees, this will be on a pro rata basis for all employees) to carry out individual and skills bank voluntary activities.

The 16 volunteer hours, may be taken as a whole block of time or alternatively, can be spread across the year. However, time off must be agreed in advance with the employee's line manager and will be subject to service needs.

#### **How do I make an application?**

It will be the employee's responsibility to organise his or her own volunteering activity whilst being supported by RBC. It is important for employees to take time to decide what volunteering activity they would be interested in, because working in an area that they would enjoy will make the experience more rewarding.

Once the employee has identified a volunteering activity and made contact with the voluntary organisation, they must complete the Employee Volunteering Request Form, which is attached to this guidance. Employees should remember to leave enough time for the request to be agreed with their line manager.

The Employee Volunteering Request Form must be completed every time they make an application to volunteer and be sent to their line manager.

### **What happens next?**

The line manager will consider the application as they are the person who will authorise time off for volunteering activities. The line manager also reserves the right to decline an application. Reasons for this decline could include service needs/delivery, planned structural changes, etc.

Once agreed or declined a copy of the Employee Volunteering Request Form will be sent to Human Resources for monitoring and evaluating purposes.

Once agreed, times and dates of the volunteering activity should be agreed in conjunction with the employee's line manager and the voluntary organisation/charity.

### **Conditions of Volunteering Activities Supported by this Scheme**

An employee who wishes to participate in a volunteer activity in the community must adhere to the following conditions:

- Time away from work must be agreed with their line manager in advance, and reasonable notice of the request must be given (at least 4 weeks). Reasonable notice is required to allow both the individual and their line manager to organise any necessary cover within their team.
- The volunteering activity should not bring the Council into disrepute.
- The volunteering activity must not conflict with the employee's work for the Council for example, acting as a treasurer for a charity that you have regular contact with in your council role. Employees should seek further advice from their line manager if they are concerned about potential conflicts of interest.
- As an employee of the Council it is important to adhere to Council's policies and procedures including the Code of Conduct. Employees must also respect confidentiality when undertaking voluntary activity. In practice, this will mean being aware of sensitive or confidential information disclosed.
- Time taken for voluntary activities must be recorded as "Volunteer Hours".
- Employees who accept a volunteering activity are expected to attend and meet their commitment. If an employee fails to attend a pre-agreed volunteering activity they will need to explain their non-attendance to their line manager. If non-attendance is due to sickness absence, then it must be reported by the usual sickness absence notification. Please

refer to the Sickness Absence policy for further information. If no reason for the absence is provided for the employee's non-attendance, this should be treated as an unauthorised absence and no payment for the time not worked will be made.

- Either party has the right to terminate an arrangement to volunteer, however a reason for the discontinuation will be required from the Council.

### **Use of Council Resources and Equipment**

In preparing for a volunteering placement, it is anticipated that it will be necessary to use some of the Council's equipment, within reason. As a reasonable guide, employees may use office facilities for the purpose of arranging their placement as detailed below:

- Up to 5 local rate telephone calls
- Up to 50 pages of photocopying
- Up to 5 faxes

Should employees require further equipment or facilities above this limit, they will need to discuss and agree this with their line manager.

There is no central volunteering budget; therefore time and costs will be covered from existing budgets. However, apart from the indirect cost of covering the work of the volunteers, it is not anticipated that direct costs will be unmanageable.

### **Monitoring and Evaluation**

Evaluation of the Employee Volunteering programme is vital so that we can improve and build on it. We endeavour to continually monitor and evaluate its impact to ensure long-term success.

Employees must send a copy of their completed "Employee Volunteering Form" to the HR Team. Their line manager will keep the original of the form to discuss with the employee as part of the wider evaluation of their learning and development activities during annual PDR meetings and at 1-2-1's.

It is the responsibility of the employee and their line manager to monitor the number of volunteering hours their employees undertake.

After the volunteering experience, we would welcome employees to record and share their experiences by completing the "Volunteering Feedback Form" and return to the HR team. This feedback will assist us to ensure our Employee Volunteering Programme is successful and worthwhile for our employees.

### **Communication**

Volunteering activities will be promoted in the following ways through:

- The intranet with appropriate links to external web sites about volunteering
- Notice Boards
- Employee Induction
- PDR's and Development
- Cascade through team talks, team briefings & 1-2-1's

### **Redditch Borough Council Volunteering Activities**

If an employee undertakes a volunteering activity, they will be automatically covered by the Council's Public Liability Insurance and the Council's Employer's Liability Insurance.

However, employees may need to undertake a risk assessment and have any additional health and safety training that is relevant to the activity i.e. manual handling. The voluntary agency will be asked to advise if this is required prior to the volunteering commencing.

## EMPLOYEE VOLUNTEERING REQUEST FORM

<p>This form should be completed when making a request for time off under this policy.</p> <p><b>Time away from work must be agreed with your line manager in advance.</b></p> <p>You should give as much notice as you can, (a minimum of 4 weeks), as this will help you and your line manager to make any necessary arrangements for cover etc where the request is approved.</p>	
<b>Name</b>	
<b>Job Title</b>	
<b>Service</b>	

<p><b>Details of the Request (to be completed by employee)</b></p> <p>Reason for request (please attach any available information you may have about the volunteering opportunity)</p>     
<p><b>Time off required: (dates and no of hours requested)</b></p>  
<p>Signed: (employee)</p> <p>Date:</p>
<p><i>When you have completed this section pass the form to your manager or supervisor who will advise you of the decision, returning a copy of the completed form to you.</i></p>

<p><b>Line Manager to Complete: Decision: Agreed/Not Agreed (delete as appropriate)</b></p>
<p>If <b>not agreed</b> please give the reason(s) for your decision</p>     
<p>Line Manager Name:</p> <p>Signed:</p>

Date:

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ON THIS POLICY, PLEASE CONTACT YOUR HUMAN RESOURCES OFFICER.**

**NOTE:** RBC reserve the right to vary the content of this document with consultation where appropriate.